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United Nations reform: measures and proposals

United Nations common system

Review of the International Civil Service Commission

Note by the Secretary-General

I. Background

1. In his note on the review of the International Civil Service Commission (A/53/688), submitted to the fifty-third session of the General Assembly, the Secretary-General recalled that in his programme of reform he had recommended that the General Assembly initiate a review of the International Civil Service Commission, including its mandate, membership and functioning, in order to increase its effectiveness in meeting the challenges facing the United Nations system of organizations.

2. The note further recalled that, by its resolution 52/12 B of 19 December 1997, on renewing the United Nations: a programme for reform, the General Assembly decided to examine the recommendation of the Secretary-General on initiating a review of the International Civil Service Commission, and, on the basis of information to be provided by the Secretary-General, requested the competent intergovernmental bodies to consider the modalities for such a review.

II. Consideration of the proposed initiative by the Administrative Committee on Coordination

3. As indicated in the above-mentioned note, the Secretary-General, recognizing the implications of the proposed review for the system as a whole, consulted with members of the Administrative Committee on Coordination on the response to the request of the General Assembly. At its session in October 1998, the Committee welcomed the Secretary-General's initiative. It endorsed the proposal that a small, geographically balanced group be created to undertake an examination of the mandate, membership and functioning of the International Civil Service Commission, in the light of the challenges faced by the United Nations system. It proposed that the review group be appointed by the General Assembly, on the recommendation of the Secretary-General in his capacity as Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Coordination, after consultation with concerned members of the Committee. It also suggested that the report of the review group be submitted to the General Assembly, together with the views of the concerned organizations of the system, including, as appropriate, their governing bodies.

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III. Action by the General Assembly

4. The above-mentioned note indicated that the Secretary-General intended to submit his recommendation concerning the membership of the proposed review group to the General Assembly at its resumed fifty-third session. In section IV of its resolution 53/209 of 18 December 1998, on the United Nations common system, the General Assembly, *inter alia*, decided to revert to a number of issues related to the Commission in the context of its consideration of the recommendation by the Secretary-General for the review of the Commission at the resumed fifty-third session of the General Assembly.[1]

IV. Recommendation of the Secretary-General

5. As these issues will now be pursued at the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly, the Secretary-General, in his capacity as Chairman of the Administrative Committee on Coordination, and after consultation with its members, is hereby submitting his recommendation concerning the composition of the proposed review group.

6. The proposed terms of reference for the review group, as contained in the annex to the note by the Secretary-General to the fifty-third session of the General Assembly (A/53/688) and also reproduced in the annex to the present note, imply a broad policy-oriented review that would set its recommendations concerning the functioning of the International Civil Service Commission in the overall context of the challenges facing the system in the next century and their implications for the role and functioning of the international civil service. Its recommendations should serve to strengthen the capacity of the General Assembly to give effective direction to this process and sustain it over time, by ensuring that the advice it receives on these matters through the International Civil Service Commission is the soundest possible and keeps pace with the evolving needs of the system and best practices in human resources management. The review should be pursued as an integral part of the effort by both the General Assembly and the Administrative Committee on Coordination to maintain the unity and integrity of the common system, while adapting it to the changing requirements of Member States and their evolving demands on the organizations of the United Nations family.

7. The Secretary-General considers that a policy-oriented review of this kind could best be carried out by a group of eminent personalities who, in addition to in-depth knowledge of the United Nations system, would contribute their high-level experience in public service and the governance of international organizations and academic institutions and who command, in view of their record, the shared confidence of Member States and the Secretariat.

8. In this light, the proposed composition of the group is as follows:

Agnes Y. **Aggrey-Orleans**	Permanent Representative of Ghana to the United Nations Office at Geneva
Isabelle **Bassong**	Ambassador of Cameroon in Brussels and Benelux, former Deputy Minister of Health of Cameroon
Imre **Hollai**	Former President of the General Assembly, Hungary
Enrique **Iglesias**	President, Inter-American Development Bank, former United Nations Under-Secretary-General, Uruguay
Ismat **Kittani**	Former President of the General Assembly, former United Nations Under-Secretary-General, Iraq
Alister **McIntyre**	Chief Technical Adviser for the Caribbean Regional Negotiating Machinery, former Vice-Chancellor of the University of the West Indies and United Nations Assistant Secretary-General, Grenada
Jean-Bernard **Mérimée**	Former Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations
Laeticia Ramos **Shahani**	Senator, former United Nations Assistant Secretary-General, Philippines
Ernst **Sucharipa**	Director, Diplomatic Academy, Vienna, former Permanent Representative of Austria to the United Nations
Franklin **Thomas**	Former President of the Ford Foundation, United States of America

Uyli **Vorontsov** Former Ambassador of the Russian Federation in the United States of America

9. It is envisaged that the servicing of the Group, including arrangements for consultations with Member States and United Nations organizations and for the provision of technical expert support and advice, will be coordinated by the Office for Inter-Agency Affairs, in collaboration with relevant parts of the Administrative Committee on Coordination, particularly the secretariat of the Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions.

Notes

[1] Section IV of resolution 53/209 reads in full as follows:

Appointment of members to the Commission and other matters

1. *Reaffirms* the statute of the Commission;

2. Emphasizes the need to adhere to the provisions of articles 3 and 4 of the statute of the Commission;

3. *Requests* the Secretary-General to draw the attention of Member States to the provisions of article 3, paragraph 1, of the statute of the Commission when presenting candidates for appointment to the Commission;

4. *Decides* to revert to issues related to the Commission, including its working methods, the respective roles of the Commission and its secretariat, the selection and appointment of members and the role of the Commission in the review process, in the context of the consideration of the recommendations by the Secretary-General for a review of the Commission at the resumed fifty-third session of the General Assembly.

Annex

Terms of reference of the Review Group

1. The Review Group will assist the General Assembly in examining the mandate, membership and functioning of the International Civil Service Commission in order to increase its effectiveness in meeting the challenges facing the United Nations system of organizations.[a]

2. To this end, the Review Group will review and analyse:

(a) The objectives underlying and the expectations of Member States, organizations and staff regarding the establishment of the International Civil Service Commission; the extent to which those objectives and expectations have been met in the evolution of the Commission (and its secretariat) since its establishment and the reasons therefor;

(b) The several proposals and initiatives of the consultative partners and the International Civil Service Commission to modify the functioning and the working methods of the Commission (including its secretariat) to ensure its independence, impartiality, effectiveness and technical competence, the extent to which these proposals and initiatives have been implemented and the reasons why they have succeeded or failed;

(c) The mandate, scope, functioning and evolution of national civil or public service commissions and similar bodies in various regions of the world to assess the extent to which their practices might provide appropriate reference at the international level;

(d) Other options that could enhance the technical expertise available to the international civil service in relation to new management methods and practices (for example, the use of expert advisory panels and of private consulting firms).

3. The Review Group will invite the representatives of Member States through the regional groups in the General Assembly and the governing bodies of the organizations participating in the United Nations common system, together with the representatives of executive heads and of the staff bodies, to provide such submissions as they wish in respect of this review.

4. Taking account of this analysis and of these submissions, the Review Group will redefine what is required of an International Civil Service Commission and will propose changes to enable the Commission to meet the challenges facing the United Nations system of organizations.

Notes

[a] As recommended by the Secretary-General in his report entitled "Renewing the United Nations: a programme for reform" (A/51/950).